DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 403 756 FL 024 379

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TITLE Enhancing Sensitivity to Human Needs: EFL Learners in Taiwan.
PUB DATE 29 Mar 96
NOTE 29p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (30th, Chicago, IL, March 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Objectives; Classroom Environment; Classroom Techniques; *Educational Attitudes; Educational Strategies; *English (Second Language); Foreign Countries; Humanistic Education; Instructional Materials; *Language Attitudes; Second Language Instruction; Second Language Learning; *Self Expression; Two Year Colleges; Two Year College Students; *Whole Language Approach
IDENTIFIERS *Taiwan

ABSTRACT

It is proposed that English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) instruction can go beyond learning driven by structures and tests and address universal human needs through an orientation toward meaning and discussion. Application of the concepts of the Whole Language Approach to EFL instruction is explored, drawing on experience with junior college students in Taiwan. Common student attitudes toward EFL, including frustration and apprehension, were addressed by developing a thematic curriculum that focuses on common interests and concerns and also encourages discussion and expression of feelings. An instructional unit on love is presented as an example of this approach; selection of varied readings, classroom discussion topics (growing pains, generation gap, romantic love, individual value), writing assignments, tests, and assessment criteria are all designed to support and encourage reflection and self-expression, and to provide material for continued discussion outside class. Student response to the approach has been very positive, characterized by increased self-confidence, enjoyment, and willingness to share personal experience with others. Contains 33 references. (MSE)

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Enhancing Sensitivity to Human Needs: EFL Learners in Taiwan

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Statement

Li-Te Li is a lecturer in Shih Chien College, National Taipei Institute of Technology, and in Language Center at National Taiwan University. She has been teaching EFL for ten years. Her teaching goal is to help students grow as a whole person. This paper was presented in TESOL '96 convention in Chicago.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank all the students in the English Reading class, whose diligence and sincerity make this experiment possible and encourage me to work further in this area. The basic idea of applying Whole Language in EFL learning was presented in 1995 English Teacher's seminar at Shih Chien College in Taipei, and the extended discussion of enhancing sensitivities to human needs through transactional EFL learning was presented in TESOL '96 convention in Chicago. I should like to thank participants at both conferences for their reactions and responses. Finally, I thank Dr. Jender Lee for her helpful comments and suggestions on drafts, and Mr. Wei-Ping Hsieh, for whose conversation and critique I am grateful every day.

Abstract

This paper asks whether EFL teaching/learning can go beyond the structure-and-test-driven way of learning, and start concerning the universal human needs by a meaning-and-discussion-oriented learning approach. It, taking Junior College students in Taiwan as an example, presents a discussion of applying Whole Language concepts in EFL setting, teaching strategies, syllabus design, and generating discussion. The purpose is to examine whether EFL learners can be encouraged and motivated through this transactional learning.

The result is, with thematic unit study, relevant reading materials, well-designed discussion, and risk-free environment Whole Language provides, learners are inspired. They get rid of the impaired self-image, and re-build self-confidence. They realize that EFL learning can also touch their hearts, their lives, and their concerns rather than just be an assignment and a burden. They start learning EFL not just for exam taking. They become more sensitive to human needs and grow as risk-takers to voice themselves in English.

Enhancing Sensitivity to Human Needs: EFL Learners in Taiwan

Li-Te Li

Introduction

This paper discusses the application of Whole Language in EFL setting, especially on the aspect of enhancing sensitivity to human needs. Before getting into the main subject, three dimensions of this title should be pointed out in advance. First, Taiwan is an EFL setting, where English is not an official language, and people seldom use English outside English classroom. Second, being human, we believe that it is necessary to understand human needs and the way how they can be fulfilled. Third, EFL learners' needs should be considered as basic human needs, and through English learning, they may also be inspired to be more sensitive to other people's needs. We will now review the situation of English learning in Taiwan with these three dimensions in mind.

In Taiwan, attending an English class usually means bringing heavy textbooks and dictionaries, blue and red pens, and rulers, to an isolated, dull room full of criticism and frustration. The only goal of English learning is to score high in numerous standardized tests. Memorizing the single correct answer is viewed as the only and the fastest way of improving one's English competence. Those who can memorize more vocabularies, phrases, and grammar rules are definitely regarded as promising students. Because the tests are highly competitive, mistakes are considered unforgivable. Actually, for those who cannot have good grades in English class, impossibilities and tiredness fill their mind. They often feel that they are dumb and "handicapped" in English learning. Such negative self-image hinders their learning as well as their interest. Moreover, because the curriculum is test-driven, most of the materials are isolated and dry. As a result, learning English becomes boring and disgusting. Some students even give up trying in order not to hurt their pride; even those "good students" rather not practice English at

their leisure time, because they think English learning is not pleasant. Thus, although they can fill the blanks correctly in tests, they do not like English from their heart, neither do they think they are capable in any English activity. English learning is simply a nightmare for some students.

English teachers in Taiwan, facing this phenomenon, cannot but ask: Is it so unavoidable that students should learn English so painfully? Are they really dumb? If taking tests should not be the ultimate goal, what is the appropriate purpose for EFL learning? If memorizing should not be the only way to improve English ability, what then should be the way of learning EFL? If peers' competition adds to the fear and frustration in making mistakes or even adds to the fear of attending classes, what kind of peer relationship should exist in EFL classroom? Furthermore, if materials used now are so non-related to students, what kind of materials can be relevant and meet our students' needs? If students' needs are taken care of, would they change their attitude toward English learning?

Whole Language Implications

At least ten years ago, some teachers noticed that, as Lipa, Harlin, and Lonberger mentioned, "the very children whose test scores indicated they were 'successful' displayed little enjoyment of reading or writing, rarely choosing to do either when given the opportunity. As a result, these teachers began to ask whether their language arts programs were really meeting the needs of the learners in their classrooms" (1991, p.5). After reviewing the programs and discussing with the professionals in the field of psycholinguistics, developmental and cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics, and cooperative learning, those teachers proposed the Whole Language philosophy, which, also includes anthropology, philosophy, and education (Weaver, 1990). The basic principles of Whole Language are:

1. Learning takes part from whole to part.
2. Reading materials should be predictable and relevant; that is, learning must be meaningful and functional.
3. Learners need language input from all four modes--listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
4. Learning takes place in social interaction.
5. Learning is cooperation instead of competition.
6. Learners should be risk-takers; in other words, learning environment should be risk-free.
7. Activities are learner-centered.
8. Comprehension involves constructing individual meaning; so, learning should be transactional instead of transmission.
9. Learners should be respected as capable and unique.
10. Making mistakes and errors are acceptable and regarded as the process of developing literacy. (Goodman, K., Goodman, Y., & Hood, 1989, 1991; Watson, 1988; Weaver, 1990)

Traditionally, EFL is mainly taught in the way of transmission, of which the underline theory is behavioral psychology. Learners have to practice skills, memorize facts and work competitively. Learning involves habit formation. Curriculum is determined by teachers or school authority. Direct teaching skills occurs in isolation. Errors are penalized; the formation of inappropriate habits is discouraged, and evaluation is often based upon a single kind of assessment, which is the standardized tests. In contrast to that, the Whole Language theory provides a way of transactional learning. Learners engage in authentic learning experiences and work collaboratively. Curriculum is negotiated among the teacher and the students; direct teaching of skills occurs as needed. Errors are regarded as necessary for risk-taking and growing, and evaluation is based upon ongoing assessment of learners' activities in authentic learning

experiences (Weaver, 1988, 1990). It emphasizes integrative, interactive, and learner-centered learning.

According to the study of developmental and cognitive psychology, language is learned better when it is whole in the meaning than in the pieces separated from the whole meaning. Therefore, "whole language teaching is away from teaching fragments of language separately or teaching four basic skills separately" (Goodman, 1986, p.39). It is believed that "there is no hierarchy of skills, and literacy develops from whole to part, from vague to precise, and from familiar contexts to unfamiliar" (Goodman, 1986, p.39).

Moreover, in order to help learners participate in learning activities, it is essential for them to feel being accepted and respected. A risk-free environment is, therefore, necessary to reach the goal of interaction. Through positive sharing and responding (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989), and through group work, learners enjoy cooperation instead of struggling with competition among peers. From the aspect of cognitive and linguistic learning, thought and language are interdependent. Lots of discussion and writing can help learners clarify their thinking and present their opinions clearly and precisely, which is the main purpose of communication. Hence, in a Whole Language class, a large amount of reading, writing, and discussion is required. By responding to what they read and others read, learners reconstruct the meanings of a text; by contemplating the meaning the writer wants to convey, they have a special interaction, or transaction, with the text and the author.

Since meaningful and functional content makes learners use this language socially, what the content is becomes a major concern. Whole Language emphasizes using authentic literature as reading materials. Such authentic literature, related to students' real experiences, introducing an entire story, conveying a whole message, usually encourages students not only to acquire this language through social and functional interaction, but also to have transactional rather than transmission learning. Instead of memorizing-and-test-driven learning, Whole Language provides a meaning-driven

learning environment. Whole Language also emphasizes that classroom exists for students, rather than students exist to fit in the classroom and class rules (Goodman, 1986, P.25). In other words, not only integrative and interactive learning, but also learners' needs, the key point of learner-centered learning, should be concerned.

In summary, in a Whole Language classroom, a from-whole-to-part instead of from-part-to-whole learning strategy is applied; a risk-free learning environment and relevant reading materials are provided. The English language is not acquired through fragments; the four skills--listening, speaking, reading, and writing--are not separated. Skill-driven transmission is replaced by meaning-driven transaction. Individual is regarded as unique; independent thinking is valued. Mistakes or errors are accepted. Cooperation instead of competition is encouraged. Life is the real part of learning, and vice versa. The Whole Language strategy has been applied successfully in some L1 (English-speaking) environment. The efficacy of its application in an EFL setting is now under scrutiny.

An Example of Thematic Unit Study: Love

Since the ideal classroom is learner-centered, and learners' needs are as important as any language skills, what their needs are and how to integrate those needs into English learning become substantial. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1968, 1970), basic human needs include human contact, safety and security, love and belongingness, and self-esteem/esteem by others (see Figure 1). Likewise, learners in an EFL classroom need to feel safe, encouraged, belonging, and respected. Therefore, a Whole Language environment, in which "teachers believe in students, respect them as learners, cherish them in all their diversity [different paces and paths in growth, unique background and thoughts] and treat them with love and dignity" (Goodman, 1986, p.25), should be built up as soon as the EFL learning begins.

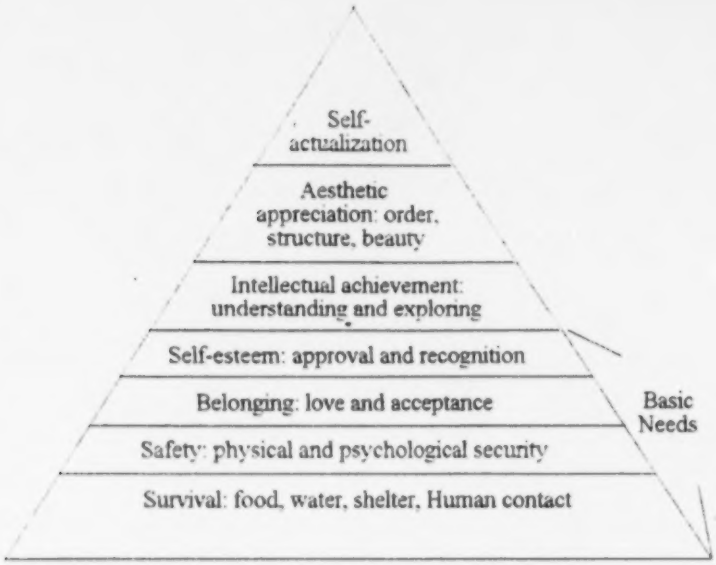


Figure 1: Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Through interviewing and discussing with students in Taiwan, we find what they care most is: LOVE. Students at junior college, the target group, are either teenagers or young adults. They are sensitive to self-identity and friendship. Due to their growing into adulthood, their relationship with parents often gives them stress. Facing the real world that they are going to involve, they feel curious and afraid of the unknown. They want to be useful to the society, and are seeking for a proper role to play in fulfilling their responsibility. They need to love and to be loved; their basic human needs should be taken care of. Therefore, the deepest concern about being a human, including love to oneself, love between parents and children, love between friends, love between lovers, and love toward the whole mankind, from understanding personal feelings to introspecting social equality and justice, is designed as a thematic unit study for EFL classroom (see Figure 2). The purpose is, by providing relevant reading materials, to motivate learners to integrate English learning into their real life, and by providing risk-free learning environment, to make learners experience the sweetness of being respected and learn the importance of respecting others. In other words, the learners' concern toward themselves and human beings is inspired, so that they can grow as a

whole person with ideas, dignity, and the capability of cooperation and consideration instead of being intellectual, competitive, correct-answer producers.

Thematic Unit Study: Love
(By Li-Te Li)

Level of Target Group: intermediate
Length of Time: 4 hours a week for the whole school year
Number of Students: 55-60

- *The Little Prince*: Theme: unique, friendship, responsibility
  sub-theme: personal relationship, death, life

- Growing pains---
  "Eleven": unforgettable experiences; educational problems
  "The Adrian Mole Diaries" (excerpts):
  a teenager's diaries; family problems

- Generation Gap---
  "Your Children Are Not Your Children": Do parents possess kids?
  "Marriage is a Private Affair":
  marriage and love vs. being obedient to parents
  (Musical: Fiddler on the Roof)
  "A Beacon in the Night":
  Can kids choose their own education and profession?

- Romantic Love---
  "A Deux"
  "A Winter's Tale"
  "Music I Heard"
  "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning"
  "When I Was One-And-Twenty"
  theme: controversial romantic love; happy, sad, firm, ironic

- Individual Value---
  "The Elevator": social status; equality vs. privileges;
  conflicts among different social classes
  "We Alone": individual value
  Value cannot be weighed on scale or on monetary or market value.
  The Color Purple: individual value; love toward oneself and others
  The reason why a person can love is because he/she accepts himself/herself first.
  "I Have a Dream": equality; individual value
  Maybe it is a dream which cannot be realized. we still can be part of its improving process.

Outside Reading:
The Life and Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.
Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary
Now Is Your Time!: The African-American Struggle for Freedom
Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl

Figure 2: An Example of Thematic Unit Study: Love

Starting Point

The target group is seniors at a Junior College, intermediate level. Although they have studied English for at least seven years, and are familiar with language skills--listening, speaking, reading, writing, they are not familiar with thinking and discussing. Learning English for them, as for other students, is a compulsive course, and an unpleasant experience, simply for exam-taking. One of the students, Patty, said:

> In the past, I just learned how to pass the tests. I tried to catch every vocabulary and memorize all contents in the textbooks. Wow! It was sort of a boring and tough task. During that period of time, I didn't think I was really interested in English. Only due to my high scores in the tests I got, I kept on learning.

Another one, Pei-Fen, mentioned, "I don't think [English] gives me any feeling. Because it's always a textbook, I cannot enjoy it and hardly get feeling from it." EFL learning in Taiwan, as we mentioned above, is isolated from students' life. During the process of learning, students seldom have interaction or dialogue with the materials they read, and hardly exchange their opinions on the reading with their classmates. Whereas, this thematic study is designed as an experiential approach; it is to encourage students to use their own experience as a basis for understanding the works, to go beyond the reading materials, and to connect ideas in the reading part with the outer world. Hopefully, "it can help students explore the relevance of the readings in a large contexts: to their lives or to people in general" (Lim & Smalzer, 1994, p.ix).

In order to help students get into the palace of literature and get a taste of the real literature instead of articles in textbooks, a cute book, *The Little Prince* (Antoine, 1982) was chosen as the first book they have to read thoroughly. *The Little Prince* consists of the themes of individual uniqueness, friendship, responsibility, as well as the profile of life and death. All these concern the students and help to draw out the whole thematic unit study later on.

Topics

Growing Pains: Love oneself

At the first stage, we read several short stories on the theme of growing pains. "Eleven", written by Sandran Cisneros (1994), tells a painful event happened to the main character on her eleventh birthday. Through the words of the character, "Because she's older and the teacher, she's right and I'm not," (Cisneros, 1994, p.26) the author points out the strain between adults and kids, the different viewpoint between teachers and students. By wondering whether the way of growing old is "kind of like an onion or like the rings inside a tree trunk or like . . . wooden dolls that fit one inside the other, each year insides the next one," (Cisneros, 1994, p.26) the story shows the difficulties and sometimes frustration of growing up. It arouses students to look back their own experiences, and their own growing path. "The focus on the self helps students find their own voices" (Moseley & Harris, 1994, p.xix). This is the first step to make EFL learning so personal. Besides, the excerpts from "The Adrian Mole Diaries", a teenager's journal entry, written by Sue Townsend (1994), records the character's feelings and observations on his overwhelming problems and reflects his belief that his parents are indifferent to him. By writing down:

Reason for not living

You die anyway

Life is nothing but anguish

There is too much cruelty in the world

"O" levels in June

My parents hate me

I've lost Pandora

Nobody leaves Barry Kent's gang alive (Townsend, 1994, p.36),

this piece of work shows teenagers' complicated and anxious inner world, and provides the readers with the opportunity to get into the real life of an adolescent. ("O" levels are standardized secondary exams in England; Pandora is his ex-girlfriend; Barry Kent is the leader of a gang he involves in).

Generation gap: Love between parents and children

As we mentioned above, students at Junior College are going to be grown-ups; the eagerness of being independent is hidden in their heart. They still love their parents and respect parents' opinions, but they hope to make their own decisions, no matter in making friends, choosing a profession, or getting married in the future. However, in the process they often face their parents' misunderstanding and their own struggling. They want to know what is the proper role for them and their parents. They are seeking for the answer or at least a chance for discussion. Actually, they do talk these problems a lot after class with their friends, but not in English class, which again points out that English class is so isolated from their life. They are "fake" ones in class, sitting there without their heart! Hence, "Your Children Are Not Your Children" (Gibran, 1923), "A Beacon in the Night" (Lurie, 1994), and "Marriage Is a Private Affair" (Achebe, 1994) are chosen as reading materials.

Your Children Are Not Your Children
(By Khalil Gibran)

You may give them your love but not your thought,
For they have their own thoughts,
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which
you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them, but seek not to make
them like you.
For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

Figure 3: Your Children Are Not Your Children (2nd Stanza)

"Your Children Are Not Your Children" (Gibran, 1923, pp.17-18), which emphasizes children need to have their own thinking, privacy, and their own rights, raises a very controversial issue for Chinese students (see Figure 3).

Customarily, if any Chinese youth conveys the opinion that parents cannot possess or decide anything for their children no matter how indirect, how non-related to the youth himself, he would have to be scolded seriously as an disobedient, impolite and

ungrateful youth. Chinese parents traditionally believe that kids are their own possession and property. By reading and discussing this poem, learners get a chance to inspect and introspect the opinion.

"A Beacon in the Night" (Lurie, 1994), based on Jewish culture, similar to Chinese culture in the family aspects, raises a question whether or not young people should be completely free to choose the kind of education, job or profession they wish without any parental interference. By comparing what the youth said, "I never wanted to be a doctor. You forced me. You pushed me. I couldn't tell you I was thrown out. I didn't want to break your heart," with what the elder said, "So what's wrong if a parent wants something a little better for his son? Something a little better than his own miserable life?" (Lurie, 1994, p.149-150), the learners get a chance to contemplate and to talk about the strain.

"Marriage Is A Private Affair" (Achebe, 1994), based on African tribal culture, raises a question whether young people should be free to marry the persons of their choice (Lim & Smalzer, 1994). Again it points out the conflict between different generations. Even though students at Junior College are usually not at the age of getting married, most of them already have boy/girlfriends; hence, the issue then can be limited to whether young people should be free to make the boy/girlfriend of their choice.

Romantic Love: Love between lovers

Young students are always curious and fascinated with romantic love, which is their favorite chatting topic; that is why relevant reading materials should include this topic. Five poems are listed in the unit study: "A Deux" by William Wood (1994), "A Winter's Tale" by D.H. Lawrence (1994), "Music I Heard" by Conrad Aiken (1994), "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" by John Donne (1966), and "When I Was One-And-Twenty" by A.E. Housman (1983). Some are happy poems; some are sad ones. Some focus on lovers' intimacy; some praise refined love. Some are serious; some,

ironic. The goal is to widen the definition of romantic love and encourage learners to check their own love experiences.

Understand/Value oneself & others: Love toward the whole mankind

Besides the pressure from parents, EFL learners feel the pressure of uncertainty and instability of self and society. Under pressure, they often search for the sense of stability and assurance in romantic love or in pursuit of material life. Therefore, reading materials on romantic love and the sense of value become essential. In traditional EFL class, learners are evaluated mostly by the performance in tests. Thus, those who can only score low in standardized tests usually feel inferior and afraid of losing dignity both at school and later in society. This raises the issue of individual value. The question being asked here is whether a person should be judged by *what he does* or by *what he is*. Some pieces of work, which can inspire learners' contemplation on such issue, are now introduced in this thematic unit study. They are "We Alone" (1994) and *The Color Purple* (1982) by Alice Walker, "The Elevator" by Bernard Malamud (1994), and "I Have A Dream" by Martin Luther King, Jr. (1994), along with the outside reading references, such as *The Life and Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Peck, 1968); *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary* (Myers, 1993); *Now Is Your Time!: The African-American Struggle for Freedom* (Myers, 1991), and *Ann Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl* (Frank, 1972). The scope of concern is widened and enlarged, including individual value, equality versus privilege, social status, and discrimination.

"The Elevator" (Malamud, 1994) discusses equality versus privilege; and "We Alone" (Walker, 1994) inspires learners to consider whether beauty and scarcity should be the only criteria to value a person (see Figure 4). This revolution, raised by Alice Walker, makes learners examine themselves and the society they are in. It is not unusual for a person who lives in the practical world to envy those outstanding people and to wish to be like them. Almost every teenager wants to be somebody someday, but frustration in school could build up negative self-image, which has serious effects

We Alone
(By Alice Walker)

We alone can devalue gold
by not caring
if it falls or rises
in the marketplace.

Wherever there is a gold
there is a chain, you know,
and if your chain
is gold
so much the worse
for you.

Feathers, shells
and sea-shaped stones
are all as rare.

This could be our revolution:
To love what is plentiful
as much as
what's scarce.

Figure 4: We Alone

on a youngster's dignity. The Whole Language approach of EFL learning is therefore designed not only to provide remedy but also to help the learners be more sensitive to individual value. For example, by showing the movie and reading the novel, *The Color Purple* (Walker, 1982), and by analyzing the process of Celie's growth, the teacher hopes that learners can understand how Celie's self-acceptance and self-respect are important for her to be a person with hope; as a result, they would, hopefully, start checking their own growing path, cast their hurted feelings behind them, and begin to care for others' feelings and rights.

With Alice Walker's revolution to love the plentiful as much as the scarce, learners could be challenged to the idea of equality among human beings, regardless of one's social status, physical complexion, skin color, race, sex, or nationality. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speech "I Have A Dream" (1994) again enforces the theme--All men are created equal. In short, that each individual is unique and should be respected, not only

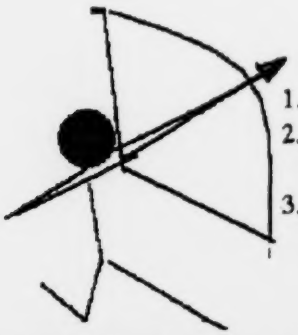
in EFL classroom but also in politics, and in any cultural encounter, is the key concept the thematic unit study would like to expand.

Related Activities

After the reading materials are chosen, the way of introducing them is crucial. Young students, reaching the stage of being self-aware, sometimes feel that they should be their own masters. However, in the meantime, they doubt whether they can discuss freely in class any topic raised in this thematic unit study and wonder whether there is a correct answer, which will be used as the criterion of assessment. Therefore, the way of teaching and learning is designed to be interactive. All the process is put into the setting of being safe and acceptable as sharing first and criticizing later (Elbow & Belanoff, 1989); that is, sharing without criticizing is highly encouraged. Because "discussion can stimulate learners' thinking and enable them to remember things that they have not thought about for a long time" (Moseley & Harris, 1994), group discussion is designed as the major part of this unit study in order to help learners see new connections, arrive at different interpretations, and discover new meanings. Since most of the EFL learners are afraid of voicing themselves no matter in oral or in written form, the first step is to help them get rid of the fear.

At first, students will be given a photo or a picture related to the topic they are going to discuss, and asked to share with others what they guess or get from the picture (See Figure 5). They then read an article or a short story which focuses on the same topic, independently or with mini lecture, to clarify what new facts, ideas, or impressions they gain from the picture and the reading. Through group discussion and idea sharing, different responses and interpretations are presented. Students are then exposed to various possibilities and learn how to respect other people's opinions even though there are disagreements. Meanwhile, they get the chance to learn the ways to express themselves clearly, to convey their own ideas specifically and also, through

experiencing different opinions, to re-evaluate their own ideas and to be mature decision-makers.



1. What does this picture refer to?
2. What is the relation between the archer, the bow, and the arrow?
3. From the aspect of parenthood, who is the archer, the bow, and the arrow?

Figure 5: Sample of pictures for discussing the topic: Love between parents and children

Take this topic--love between parents and children--as an example. By encountering the picture, guessing the meaning and discussing the poem and short stories, the learners gain new ideas and information about the relationship between parents and children and also about different kinds of parental love, which may be a lot different from what they were taught before. Therefore, they need to have profound introspection, think again their own standpoint, and also be understanding to the role of parents. Most of the time, even the teenagers disagree with the concept of the poem--"Your Children Are Not Your Children" (Gibran, 1994). They feel sorry for the parents in the poem, but at the same time they eager to have such parents, who do not possess their children. However, when they talk about the future, most of them think they will be like their parents controlling their children, even though they do not want to be that way. They are confused, but through this process of introspection, they have a chance to form an appropriate answer for themselves. They try to make their own decision to respond to this new idea and information. They exchange their opinions clearly and not to offend those with opposite or different opinions; they learn to choose

the most proper way to present their thinking by interacting with others. Moreover, through the process of comprehending, they clarify their belief, realize their own needs, know the needs and feelings of their parents better, and want to be more considerate to themselves as well as to their parents.

Furthermore, interactive learning not only happens among students but also between students and their teacher. Through journal writing (Peyton, 1990), paper, and presentation, two-way communication exists. All these help learners increase their understanding of themselves and the ways of interaction with other people as well as other phenomena in their world. As a result, the learners' basic needs, such as human contact (interaction), safety (risk-free), being encouraged and respected, are taken care of.

Evaluation

In order not to make the whole process of learning a test-and-grade-driven one, an on-going evaluation is emphasized (see Figure 6). During class session, there

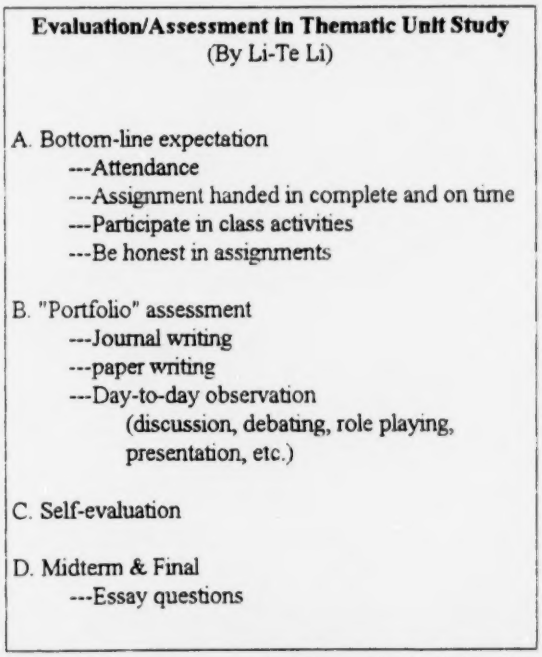


Figure 6: Assessment in Thematic Unit Study

are lots of group discussions, role playings, and debates; all are assessed when performed. The amount of participation in and contribution to the group is the bottom-line expectation, because sharing and discussion are regarded as ways of developing linguistic and cognitive competence. The more students share their own opinions with others, the more clear they view the whole topic and the more specific they can write in expressing their viewpoints. Journal writing is also an on-going assessment. During the process of interchanging ideas on journals, the improvement and development of a student's learning can be evaluated, not with a single correct answer or standardized tests but with a long-term observation and interaction. These writing assignments focus on sharing different opinions instead of correcting grammar or linguistic skills. It means that it focuses on semantic aspect rather than syntactic aspect.

Moreover, self-evaluation is also important, which strengthens students' responsibility on learning and avoid the concept that the grade is controlled by the teacher. By doing self-evaluation, students see themselves as capable and responsible learners. Only when they can be their own "masters", they feel the learning is relevant to them. This is another way to enhance the need of being heard and respected. Presentation can be held individually or in groups. Either way the assessment goes on is during the preparation and the presentation.

Mid-term and Final exams are both held either open-book or take-home, in essay-question format (see Figure 7). What is evaluated is not their memorization but their comprehension, expression, and application. The purpose is to draw out students' unique thinking rather than encourage them to echo others' opinions. Therefore, learners are always asked to give creative answers in their own words during mid-terms and finals. In western countries, this kind of Mid-terms or Finals may not be anything special. However, in Taiwan, only students in English literature major have essay tests written in English; therefore, students are afraid to write in the beginning. Whereas, take-home and open-book formate makes it easier for them, and because they have already known that their opinions would be respected, they start trying and love it later

Sample of Mid-term and Final Questions
(By Li-Te Li)

* Compare the themes of "Marriage is a Private Affair" and "Your Children Are Not Your Children". Give any one of the positive or negative examples in our own society or in your life.

* Sitting in a cafe, listening to your boyfriend's ambition, you stare at him and wonder if he does care and love you, so you interrupt his talking and ask him seriously, "Do you love me?" He laughs and says, "What a silly question you ask!" but doesn't answer you directly. Suddenly, your favorite poem about love comes upon your mind and you cannot but share it with him to let him know the definition of love in your own mind and to make sure the question you ask is not a silly question.

* From what we have read, choose similes or metaphors to explain what they refer to. The title of the article or the poem and the page number should be mentioned.

* Alice Walker said in "We Alone", "This could be our revolution: To love what is plentiful as much as what's scarce." What message did she want to convey? Explain it by using "The Color Purple" as an example.

* If there probably is no such thing as a classless society, how can we still believe or practice "All men are created equal"? How can we still believe that we are unique and have our own value in the world?

Figure 7: Sample of Mid-term and Final Questions

on. A student, Ripley, mentioned:

> I spent a long time sitting in front of the computer to type my lovely and long answer. It's really painful. But when I finished them all, I found out that I learned a lot. That's the feeling I would always have when I finished your tests and assignments.

Yun-Lan, another student, also said:

> I really enjoy writing your papers. Isn't it unbelievable? . . . I have to admit that I did pour all my energy on these topics. I spend a lot of time on thinking the questions, organizing my thoughts, writing them down in English and correcting the mistakes until I was nearly exhausted (physically and mentally) . . . because I always have so much to say when I start to think about those interesting and

controversial issues. I enjoy/love thinking about the topics you gave--friendship, generation gap, racial discrimination, educational problems, etc.. . . . It is so wonderful to express all my silly ideas, and it is worthy to view my thinking more clearly through doing it.

Conclusion

Since all the discussions are spurred from daily life, personal relationships and basic concerns, students have highly interest, curiosity, and motivation to exchange ideas. The idea-exchanging is so natural that there is no stress or fear of giving wrong answers. Transactional learning, therefore, is built up. EFL learners can get the meaning from the text themselves; the focus of reading and writing is comprehension and idea-sharing, instead of correcting mistakes. As a result, they get into a habit of thinking, sharing, and reading. Their confidence and interest grow. There is no irrelevant materials, no unhealthy competition. Learning can always be in daily life. The needs of belongingness is taken care of.

EFL students, like other people, need to be concerned, and have the energy to care others when their own needs are fulfilled. Since EFL learners can discuss their feelings of being a child, both positive and negative, and since EFL learners can discuss their love toward their boy/girlfriends, EFL class becomes more real and lively, related to experiences in daily life. The reading and the topic they discuss in class can be continued outside the class, which was impossible in the past. In the past, EFL learners seldom continued talking about what they have learned in English class except checking their assignments for taking tests. However, by providing EFL learners relevant reading materials and interactive learning process, EFL students' fear in English learning disappears gradually. By building up self-confidence through respect and acceptance in class, and by cooperative learning, students make great strides toward caring others instead of just paying attention to their own needs. They start showing their respect

and acceptance to others; the most obvious is that they are willing to listen, to consider, and to negotiate with others rather than refuse, or compete with others.

As Ruby mentioned, "About sharing English, I think that's the part I liked most. because I can understand what others' opinions are, share my feelings to them and learn a lot from others. I think it's the best way to help us communicate." Hsiao-Shan also said:

> The biggest fruit this class gave me is that I am not shy and nervous [any more] when I have to talk in public. . . . Because of discussing in class, everyone has to share his/her own ideas with others. . . . I have more courage and desire to show my feelings and opinions. I have more ideas, concerns about human needs by communicating with classmates and teacher. In short, I'm very proud of what I get in this class. Everyone's existence enriches my life and makes it more brilliant.

In addition to those who are benefited by positive sharing and discussing, there are some students who grow as independent thinkers and risk-takers, such as Wen, who mentioned, "My biggest reward is that I can think about things independently," and Patty said:

> I think I do become a risk-taker in English sharing, in some view points. For example, I remembered in the past, no matter how I'd like to read some famous English fiction or novels, I just past the shelf. I told myself that reading a book written in another language will waste your energy and time. . . . But after those reading assignments, I found that maybe it's not so difficult to read them as I thought before. It totally gave you a new feeling about the story. So, now, when I see books in which I'm interested in book stores, I will buy them home, and try to finish them at the leisure time."

As for being more sensitive to human needs, Pei-Ren's comment can be the representative:

> In this class, I started to realize that learning English could be so human. I mean we not only learned how to study it, but also enjoyed it very much. . . . I got to admit that I rarely concentrated on human needs before. Usually I only cared

about my own needs. But since then, I began to take care of it as possible as I can. Gradually, I realize that I'm a being, a human being with heart, wisdom, and emotion. That means you shouldn't be so cold with everything or do things without consciousness. . . . I think the greatest thing I learned from this class is that I'm a human being, who tries to be sensitive to human needs."

There is no standardized evaluation list, no statistics to show the percentage of pros and cons. However, there are letters from almost all the students to share naturally and fluently what they learn and how they feel about learning English in this way. Some mentioned about being risk-takers; some, being independent readers; some, being more sensitive to human needs.

EFL learners finally find their esteem and dignity back and become more mature to start showing respect to others. EFL class finally gets rid of being boring and frustrating and becomes real and related to learners' life. They realize that EFL learning can also touch their hearts, their lives, and their concerns rather than just be an assignment and a burden. They start learning EFL not just for exam taking. They think and they grow. The most important is: they are "real" instead of "fake" ones sitting in the classroom. Although enhancing the sensitivity to one's own needs or others' needs is a long process, each one of us can still be part of the process.

What is the purpose of education? Isn't it to help the learners value themselves? Isn't it to help the learners become a whole person with global view and ultimate concern (Hanson, 1989)? Although EFL or English teaching is not the only way for people to grow, EFL learning and teaching can and should play a very important role in this regard.

Self-Evaluation of this Program

Although there is much positive feedback from students and some of these experiments are successful, there are things that need to be improved. For example, although it is good to keep a group of same members in learning to provide a risk-free environment, it may decrease the freshness in sharing ideas. Besides, students may forget speaking English, the target language, when they enjoy sharing unique opinions. Moreover, since the emphasis is on enhancing sensitivity, the more efficient ways of enhancing competence of vocabulary and other basic skills may sometimes be neglected.

However, it is just because there is room for improving, there is also room for growing. In the process of teaching and learning, the teacher becomes co-learner, and learns a lot from the class. Seeing students gain their self-confidence in English reading and writing, grow as risk-takers, voice themselves confidently, get into a habit of reading and writing, develop both linguistic and cognitive ability and, most of all, become sensitive to human needs, the teacher grows with them. That is why the experiment will keep going and the teacher writes this article to share her experiences with her colleagues.

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